Castlemaine Naturalist

June 2001

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New Bird for District

During the Swift Parrot Survey John Alexander who had joined us for the day asked the team at North Castlemaine for a look at a bird book. John has been Atlassing for quite some time, but when he described the birds he'd seen down on the creek near the bridge on McManus Road, and then pointed to the Bell Miner we, the "old hands", were able to tell him that it was unlikely to impossible that that is what he saw, but we went with him to have a look - **and he was right!** The single "tink" that all of us had put down to "probably a Crimson Rosella making a single note" *was* the call of the Bell Miner. At least 3 birds were seen harassing some Fuscous Honeyeaters and Crimson Rosellas, with the possibility of five birds being present. The nearest colonies most of us knew of are in the Melbourne suburbs around Blackburn and Nunawading.

Though the discovery was a thrill, it also is a bit worrying because like all miners, which are honeyeaters, the Bell Miners are also aggressive towards other birds, driving them out of their chosen territory. They normally are found in wetter forests, and it is usual to see them along creeks and rivers in the areas in which the are found.

Three teams went out over the weekend, one to the Guildford and Strangways areas, and one to North Castlemaine and Muckleford area on Saturday, and the third to the Castlemaine Golf Course on Sunday where, at last, a good number of Swift Parrots were recorded. Conditions, especially on the Saturday afternoon were far from ideal as it was cold and cloudy, and the birds are seldom active on days like this, and they are very hard to identify against the grey sky if they *are* spotted - but we enjoyed ourselves, just the same.

Rita Mills

Skydancers is having a sale of native plants during June as they are closing down the retail side of the nursery.

Be sure not to miss out!!

April at the Castlemaine Golf Course

Brown-headed,
White-naped,
Yellow-tufted,
Black-chinned and
New Holland
Honeyeaters
Red-browed Finch
Yellow-rumped
Thornbill
Golden Whistler
Silvereyes
Lots of Spotted and
Striated Pardalotes
Grey Fantail
Yellow Robin
Restless Flycatcher
Dusky Woodswallows
Laughing
Kookaburras
Olive-backed Oriole
Mistletoebird
Brown Tree-creeper
Stubble Quail
Little Eagle
Great Egret
White Ibis
White-faced Heron
Crested Shrike-tit
White-eyed or
Hardhead Duck
White-browed
Scrubwren
Long-billed Corella

From April 25th there have been flocks of Swift Parrots ranging in number from 10 to 50 birds on different days, and I have even had four Swift Parrots at my home

Debbie Worland

Birds Australia Big Birthday Birdwatch
Sunday July 1

To celebrate Birds Australia's (R.A.O.U.) Centenary the Atlassing team is planning a super day of Atlassing throughout Australia . We are hoping to have as many Atlassers and friends involved as possible.

I plan to cover the under-surveyed area of Redesdale to east of Tooberac. If we have enough people involved we can split up into groups, meeting for morning tea at Mt. Lofty and lunch at Tooberac.

If you are unable to join us, either for the morning or full day, perhaps you could manage to do a survey or two in your local area on that day?

Please contact me (Margaret Badminton) on 5473 4555 or write your name on the list at the June meeting.

We will leave from outside CHIRP promptly at 9am. Bring warm, waterproof clothing, G.P.S. or map if you have them, binoculars, lunch and drinks.

A special treat will be served for morning tea!

Margaret Badminton

Native Silk

The following article is from the Mount Alexander Mail, 6/11/1857, and provided by Barbara James.

"Native Silk. We find the following paragraph in the report read at the monthly meeting of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce, held on Tuesday - 'The attention of your committee has been drawn to a specimen of fibre, which is found in great abundance in the vicinity of Castlemaine. Its texture resembles the finest silk, and it has been inspected with much interest since its introduction to the Chamber by Jacob Little, Esq., of Castlemaine. It is the intention of your committee to transmit samples of the fibre to the Chambers of Commerce in London, Liverpool and Paris, by the first opportunity, in order that its commercial value may be ascertained.' The substance here alluded to has for some months been made the subject of a study by a gentleman who has given considerable attention to the habits of the insect by which the 'silk:' is produced, and who we understand intends publishing the information he has acquired. The insect exists in innumerable quantities in his neighbourhood, and may be found on almost any gum tree. We have no doubt it is equally abundant in other parts of the colony."

Can any reader provide any information about the "silk", or the insect that produces it?

E Perkins

A Tribute

Some of our long-term members regrettably have resigned from the club or are longer on the committee.

Enid Hall has been a member of the club for many years. She was a regular attender in earlier years, and made many welcome contributions at meetings.

Frank Duffin has also been a member since the early days of the club. He has been our member with the most-distant address, with his main home at Mornington. As well as being a member of the Castlemaine club, he has been a leading member, and president of the Mt. Martha Field Naturalists Club. Frank has also been a regular attender at meetings of the Victorian Field Naturalists Clubs Association, and before that, the Western Victoria Field Naturalists Clubs Association. Frank has wide interests in natural history. I particularly looked forward each year to his contribution at our members' nights.

Kay Turner has been a member of the club's committee for many years, and provided a meeting place for the business meetings. Those at the business meetings appreciated particularly the open fire during winter months, and were often quite reluctant to leave it for the outside cold. Even

more appreciated has been her company on excursions. Trips to Terrick Terrick or Tullaroop Reservoir would not be the same without Kay. Birding trips with Kay are a delight. I have been amazed with her knowledge of birds and her ability to identify them by call, even from a car with closed windows along a rough bush track.

I would like to thank each for their contribution to the club over the many years of their memberships. We hope that from time to time they can come along to meetings and take part again in the Club's outings.

Ern Perkins, President.

How well do you know the Mount Alexander Shire?

1. Seven streams form part of the boundary of the Shire. Which streams, and where are they?

2. The Shire is made up of districts. Could you find your way to the following?
   a. Neereman
   b. Eastville
   c. Langley
   d. Greenhill
   e. Werona
   f. Green Gully

3. There are five extinct volcanoes (or eruption points) in the Shire? What are their names? Where are they?

4. Mt. Alexander is the highest peak. Which are number 2 and 3?

5. Which is the lowest point in the Shire?

6. Where is the geographical centre of the Shire?

7. Where is Glenluce Springs?

Answers p.6

Still more name changes for plants.

The following are some name changes given in The Census of the Vascular Plants of Victoria, sixth edition.

If you have not yet changed the name of the beautiful late-winter pea flower, Variable Hovea, you can relax. Its name has changed from *Hovea linearis* back to *Hovea hetrophylla.* The restored name is appropriate, as the leaf size, on the one plant, is quite variable.

Wallowa, which is a common wattle north-west of Bendigo, has changed from *Acacia calamifolia* to *A. euthycarpa*

River Club-rush, which grows locally at Metcalfe and Barfold, has changed from *Schoenoplexus validus* to *S. tabernaemontani*

The Downy Daisy, *Bracyscome leptocarpa* is now included in the Weak Daisy, *B debilis*. Both are uncommon locally.

Link's Wallaby-grass has changed from *Austrodanthonia linkii* to *A. bipartita*. The common name no longer seems to be appropriate.

Hairy Bursaria, *Bursaria lasiophylla*, which differs from Sweet Bursaria in that the backs of the leaves are hairy, has been reduced to a variety of *Bursaria spinosa*.

The names of orchids continue to change. Ladies Tresses are now *Spiranthes australis* (was *S. sinesis*), Golden Moths is now *Diuris chryseopsis* (was *D. lanceolata*) and Wallflower Orchid is now *D. orientis* (was *D. longifolia*).

Many of the genera in the iris family are now included in *Moraea*. The genera include *Homeria* (the Cape Tulips) and *Galaxia* (a weed localized near Ravenswood). The correct name for the local trigger plant seems to be in doubt. The census uses *Stylidium* sp 1. The name given to foothills form of Yam Daisy is *Microseris* sp 3.

It is not clear whether or not some species are native or introduced. Such species include Tumbleweed (*Salsola kali*), Caltrop (a weed along the railway at in Kennedy Street, *Tribulus terrestris*), Common Cotula (*Cotula australis*), Water Buttons (*Cotula coronopifolia*), Common Heliotrope (*Heliotropium europaeum*), Toad Rush (*Juncus bufonius*), Water Pepper (*Persicaria hydropiper*) and Couch Grass (*Cynodon dactylon* var *dactylon*).

E Perkins

Observations

- Ern and Lesley Perkins were at the Goldfields Revegetation Nursery when they saw Magpies swooping a bird on the ground. It proved to be a Chestnut Banded Rail.
- Peter Starr commented that he also has seen a Chestnut Banded Rail on his property at Elphinstone.
- John and Jacqui Turnbull have been fostering two joeys, and had an alarming experience when the the joeys decided to sample the azaleas. Both animals became lethargic and obviously ill. John and Jacqui had to force them to drink, but both eventually recovered, one taking 24 hours longer than the other.
- Geraldine Harris told of a wild Kangaroo doe who has become so tame that she will enter Geraldine's friend's house and leave the joey in the sitting room and go off for 3 or 4 hours, leaving them to baby-sit!
- Debbie Worland reports that the Emperor Gum Moths hatched out on 21/4.

• On Tuesday 22/5 about 3.30pm there was a sudden influx of birds in the treetops at 118 Blakeley Road, including a flock of about 30 Spotted Pardalotes, at least 20 Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters, and a few Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. Earlier in the month large flocks of Brown-headed Honeyeaters visited the bird bath on several occasions. Rita Mills.

• Brenda Envall's apple tree with the over ripe fruit has still been attracting the birds. This time Silvereyes, Red Wattlebirds and Magpies were all indulging. She also reported New Holland Honeyeaters, Spotted Pardalotes, a Restless Flycatcher and Black-shouldered Kite all at her place in Harcourt.

• On the outing to the Rise and Shine in May several orchids were found, including two different Midge Orchids (*Genoplesium* sp.), Autumn Greenhood (*Pterostylus revoluta*) and Red-tip Greenhood (*P. sp. aff. parviflora*). There were also several Parsons Bands (*Eriochilus cucullatus*); most were finished but one or two still had flowers.

• Maureen Dredge reported having about half a dozen Mistletoebirds, both males and females, at her place.

• Crescent Honeyeaters were seen bathing in Perkins' bird bath during May.

• While atlassing in Walmer bush Rita Mills met with a fellow who told her that often on a fine winter's day he would find Re-bellied Black snakes sunning themselves near the entrance to their holes nearby. He said that the ones in that area are a dull red on the belly, not the brilliant red of the ones found at Barfold Gorge.

Gower School birds, 13/5/01

2.25 - 3.35 pm

Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters (lots)
Red Wattlebird (very prominent/loud)
Golden Whistler (1m, 1f)
Spotted Pardalote (calling continuously)
White-browed Babbler (2)
Yellow Robin (1)
White-naped and Fuscous Honeyeater (both heard regularly)
Black-chinned Honeyeater (3)
Superb Fairy-wren
Galah
Grey Fantail
Brown Tree-creeper
Grey Shrike-thrush
Willie Wagtail
Magpie
Eastern Rosella

Phillip West

Quiz answers

1. Shire boundaries. Joyce's Creek/Deep Creek (at Joyce's Creek/Strathlea/Campbelltown); Loddon River (at Cairn Curran); Tullaroop Creek (Eddington/Baringhup West); Myrtle Creek (Myrtle Creek/Lyall/ Redesdale); Campaspe River (for about a kilometre north of Barfold Falls); Pipers Creek (Langley/Barfold); Coliban River (for about a kilometre north of Malmsbury). Joyces Creek becomes Deep Creek east of Campbelltown.

2. Districts. Neereman - south of Bells Swamp; Eastville - north of Bells Swamp; Langley (SE corner); Greenhill - east of Malmsbury; Werona - SW corner; Green Gully - east of Newstead.

3. Volcanoes. Mt. Consultation at Campbells Creek; Bald Hill at Yandoit; Heagney Hill (or Rocky Hill) at Campelltown; Werona Hill; Green Hill near Metcalfe.

4. Mt. Alexander 746m; Mt. Tarrengower 565 m; Green Hill 560m. There are many hilltops in southern Fryers Ridge area that are more than 500 metres.

5. Lowest point. 180 metres at Tullaroop Creek/Loddon River at Eddington.

6. Mid point. About 2 km west of the Bacon factory. This is the balance point. There are many other 'centres'. Another is near Mt. Consultation. This latitude and longitude of this point is half-way between the most northerly and southerly latitude, and the east-west longitude.

7. Vaughan. Glenluce is south and east of the springs.

FROM THE BUSINESS MEETING, 24/5/01

Advance Notice The **Bird Challenge** is on again this year on the first weekend in December. This is a fun day (pretty strenuous, but fun), with a real purpose - **to get a good idea of the fluctuations of species and numbers in different areas all over Australia.**

We need as many people as possible to take part, as teams need to consist of at least 3 people, and the more teams there are the more satisfactory the count. You can either do a half or a full day. We meet up at lunchtime.

Please resolve to take part this year and note it on your calendar now!

September Club Campout Thurs. 27 - Sun 30. This campout is to be held at the Paradise Gardens (formerly Redman Bluff) Camping Ground, Long Gully Road, Pomonal, on the eastern slopes of the Grampians almost under Redman Bluff itself. There are lots of birds, flowers, including plantings of numerous grevilleas, walking tracks and a telescope for astronomy at the camp. A visit to the Nook at Moyston, famous for its orchids, is visualized, as well as a visit to a nearby plant nursery which is set in a large acreage of native bush. This is a wholesale nursery which also grows Banksias and other native plants, as well as Proteas and Leucodendrons, for the cut flower market.

If you wish to book an on-site van please give Rita your name as soon as possible (Ph. 5472 4553). One day's fee is required as a deposit ($18) for an on-site van.

The Secretary has a brochure. Bookings to be finalised by mid-Augus.t Names and site requirements can be given to Rita.

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST, MARCH 2001 PROGRAM

General Meetings are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) hall, at 8.00pm on the second Friday of each month, except January. Entrances to the car parks are beside the Art Gallery and beside the Church building in Lyttleton Street. **Excursions** leave promptly at times stated, usually on the Saturday after the general meeting, (BYO afternoon tea). There are NO excursions on TOTAL FIRE BAN days. **Also note** that outdoor events are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions.

Business Meetings are held at 27 Doveton Street on the 4th Thursday of each month, except December, at 7.30pm. All members are invited to attend.

VISITORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME TO CLUB MEETINGS AND EXCURSIONS

Fri. June 9 **The Expedition Pass Project .** Speakers are John Ellis and Marie Jones of the Golden Point LandCare group. UCA hall, 8pm.

Sun June 11 Golden Point Reservoir (not Expedition Pass Res.) Leave 13 Mostyn St. at 1.30pm sharp. Leader E. Perkins. (Because there is a working quarry nearby which works 6 days a week Sunday is the only day that we can go to the Res.).

Sun July 1 **Birds Australia Big Birthday Birdwatch** See p2.

Fri. 13 July. **Toad Studies in the Northern Territory.** Speaker is Graeme Watson. UCA hall, 8pm

Sat. July 14. **District Fungi.** Leader is R. Mills. Leave Chirp 1.30 sharp.

Fri. Aug. 10. **Weed Control in the Mount Alexander Shire.** Speaker is Darren Bos, Environmental Project Officer for Mount Alexander Shire. UCA hall, 8 pm.

Wed Aug. 15 **Cape Broom Pull.**

Thurs. 27 - Sun 30 Sept. **Club Campout at Paradise Gardens (Redman Bluff) Camping Ground.** See P.7.

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Disclaimer - The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributor and not necessarily those of the club.

2001 Committee E. Perkins (President) ph 5472 3124, C. Morris (V.P. and Grievance Officer), G. Broadway (Sec.). ph. 5472 2513, J. Turnbull (treas.) ph. 5474 3005, R. Mills (N/L Ed. and P.O.), M. Dredge, M. Oliver, B. Maund, B. Envall.

Subscriptions for 2001 -

Ordinary Membership: Single ,$22 Family, $30
Pensioner or student: Single $19 Family $24
Supporting: $31

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